

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07

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FM AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5085

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGUI

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSULATE DOUALA BY POUCH

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 YAOUNDE 0386/1

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CM

SUBJECT: UNC PARTY CONGRESS NEARS: EXPRESSIONS OF SUPPORT FOR
AHIDJO AND RUMORS OF DISSENT

REF: (A) YAOUNDE 232; (B) YAOUNDE'S A-7, JANUARY 20, 1975

1. SUMMARY. AS UNC NATIONAL CONGRESS FEBRUARY 10 STARTING
DATE NEARS, CONCERTED CAMPAIGN BY PARTY UNITS CALLING FOR
AHIDJO TO ACCEPT RENEWED PRESIDENTIAL MANDATE HAS BEEN MOUNTED.
RUMORS HAVE INCREASED ALSO ABOUT ALLEGED PLANS FOR MANIFESTING
DISSENT RANGING FROM DEMONSTRATIONS IN DOUALA DURING CONGRESS
TO MOVES TO LESSEN AHIDJO'S PRESENTLY TOTAL GRIP ON BOTH PARTY
AND GOVERNMENT. SECURITY MEASURES IN DOUALA ARE UNDERSTAND-
ABLY TIGHT. BUT DESPITE NATURAL MEASURE OF PRE-CONGRESS
MALAISE, EXPECTATION REMAINS THAT CONGRESS WILL PROCEED
SMOOTHLY WITH AHIDJO DOMINATING THOROUGHLY AND EMERGING
ESSENTIALLY UNDIMINISHED. END SUMMARY.

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2. JANUARY 20 CALL BY WOMEN'S WING (OFUNC) OF UNC PARTY FOR PRESIDENT AHIDJO TO ACCEPT ANOTHER MANDATE (REF A) MARKED OPENING OF CONCERTED CAMPAIGN OF "SPONTANEOUS" RESOLUTIONS FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY URGING AHIDJO TO REMAIN AT HELM OF PARTY AND STATE. WHILE OFUNC GROUPS AT SECTION (DEPARTMENT) LEVEL REMAIN LEADING VOICES IN THIS CAMPAIGN, IT HAS BROADENED TO INCLUDE UNC, JUNC (PARTY YOUTH WING), UNTC (UNIFIED LABOR MOVEMENT LOOSELY AFFILIATED WITH PARTY), AND ASSORTED NON-PARTY GROUPS INCLUDING UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ASSOCIATION. ALL RESOLUTIONS FULL OF UNBOUNDED PRAISE FOR AHIDJO'S DEVOTION AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

3. CAMEROONIAN TEACHING STAFF AT UNIVERSITY OF YAOUNDE HAS ADDED ITS VOICE, ALBEIT WITH GREATER DIGNITY AND LESS SIMPLISTIC ADULATION, IN LONG MESSAGE THAT MADE POINT OF SUPPORTING INTEGRATION OF UNIVERSITY AND ITS HUMAN RESOURCES INTO REALISTIC RESOLUTION OF NATIONAL PROBLEMS. ALTHOUGH MESSAGE ENDED WITH CLEAR EXPRESSION OF CONFIDENCE AND SUPPORT FOR AHIDJO, THRUST OF TEXT WAS ON BROADER PHILOSOPHICAL POLICY ORIENTATIONS AND ROLE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY, RATHER THAN ON OVERLY PERSONALIZED PRAISE OF PRESIDENT.

4. IN CONTRAST TO MASSIVE PUBLICITY CONCENTRATED ON ADULATION OF PRESIDENT AND CALL FOR HIM TO ACCEPT RENEWED MANDATE, VHERE ARE SOME INDICATIONS OF DISSENT AND MALAISE. IN REALM OF KNOWN FACT, ANTI-AHIDJO AND PRO-UNC (THE OLD COMMUNIST-SUPPORTED OPPOSITION PARTY) SIGNS AND TRACTS HAVE APPEARED IN DOUALA. ANTI-AHIDJO SIGNS HAVE ALSO SURFACED IN BUEA, CAPITAL OF FORMER WEST CAMEROON. SECURITY FORCES HAVE BECOME VERY VISIBLE IN DOUALA. (WITH RUMORS OF PLANNED EFFORTS TO DISRUPT SMOOTH FUNCTIONING OF PARTY CONGRESS THROUGH DEMONSTRATIONS OR EVEN VIOLENT ACTION, IT IS OF COURSE NATURAL FOR SECURITY SERVICES TO PREPARE FOR ALL EVENTUALITIES. PHYSICAL SECURITY IN DOUALA IS REPORTED AS VERY TIGHT, WITH CAMEROONIAN TRAVELERS BEING SCREENED, SECURITY FORCES HEAVILY AUGMENTED, AN ELABORATE INTER-SERVICE COMMAND POST ALREADY IN OPERATION, AND PLANNING UNDERWAY TO PROTECT "STRATEGIC" LOCATIONS).

5. IN THE REALM OF THE UNCONFIRMED, THERE ARE STORIES OF CONFIDENTIAL

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POLITICAL INFIGHTING TO LOOSEN AHIDJO'S ALL-POWERFUL GRIP ON PARTY AND/OR GOVERNMENT. ONE RECURRING LOCAL DOUALA THEME, QUITE CREDIBLE AT LEAST HYPOTHECTICALLY, IS OF DISCONTENT THAT THE PRESIDENT OF UNC SECTION FOR WOURI DEPARTMENT (DOUALA AND ENVIRONS) IS A MUSLIM FROM NGAOUNDERE, TANKO HASSAN. ONE VERSION EVEN DENIES THAT TANKO HASSAN IS FROM NORTH CAMEROON, BUT RATHER IMPUTES NIGERIAN ORIGIN TO HIM. SOMETIMES MENTIONED AS CANDIDATES FOR REPLACING HIM ARE SEVERAL DOUALA

NATIVE SONS: PAUL SOPPO PRISO, AN OLD-TIME AHIDJO POLITICAL RIVAL AND CURRENTLY LEADING CAMEROONIAN BUSINESSMAN; CHRISTIAN TOBIE-KUOH, FORMER CLOSE AIDE OF AHIDJO AT PRESIDENCY, NOW A DOUALA BUSINESSMAN; AND EVEN MINISTER AND ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL AT PRESIDENCY FRANCOIS SENGAT-KUO, AN EXTREMELY ABLE AND VERSATILE FORMER UPC OPPOSITIONIST WHO IS CURRENTLY CONSIDERED ONE OF AHIDJO'S MOST INFLUENTIAL AIDES AND ADVISORS - SEE REF B. ACCORDING TO ONE SOURCE, SENGAT-KUO IS FED UP WITH DOING ALL THE WORK WHILE PLAYING SECOND FIDDLE TO MINISTER OF STATE, SECRETARY GENERAL AT PRESIDENCY PAUL BIYA AND IS THUS THE MAN BEHIND DOUALA'S "ORGANIZED" PRE-CONGRESS ANTI-AHIDJO MOVEMENT. HARD TO BELIEVE THAT SENGAT-KUO WOULD SO LIGHTLY RISK ALL, OR THAT HE WOULD EVEN WANT THE UNC SECTION PRESIDENCY IN LIEU OF HIS PRESENT NATIONAL INFLUENCE.

6. RELATING TO BROADER NATIONAL LEVEL, THERE IS PERSISTENT RUMOR THAT TO LESSEN AHIDJO'S GOVERNMENTAL POWER, CONGRESS WILL CALL FOR AMENDMENT TO CONSTITUTION TO CREATE PRIME MINISTER POSITION. WE BELIEVE CREATION OF SUCH A NEW POST IS CREDIBLE POSSIBILITY, BUT WOULD NOT NECESSARILY INTERPRET IT EITHER AS INSPIRED BY DESIRE OF THE DISCONTENTED TO LESSEN AHIDJO'S POWER OR AS LIKELY TO HAVE ANY SUCH SIGNIFICANT RESULT. IT COULD BE RESULT OF AHIDJO'S DESIRE TO LIGHTEN THE ROUTINE BURDENS OF OFFICE - SEE REF B. CANDIDATES MENTIONED ARE: BIYA (A LIKELY AHIDJO CHOICE - REF B); NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT SALOMON TANDENG MUNA (WEST CAMEROON'S TOP REPRESENTATIVE, THOUGH A FIGUREHEAD, IN PRESENT GURC HIERARCHY AND LONG AHIDJO'S CHIEF POLITICAL COLLABORATOR FROM WEST CAMEROON); MINISTER DELEGATE AT PRESIDENCY IN CHARGE OF STATE INSPECTION GENERAL GILBERT ANDZE TCHOUNGUI (AN ABLE ADMINISTRATOR); AND DIRECTOR OF CIVIL CABINET AT

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EUR-12 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01

INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02

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R 051045Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5086
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGUI
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
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AMCONSULATE DOUALA BY POUCH

C O N F I D E N T I A L FINAL SECTION OF 2 YAOUNDE 0386/2

PRESIDENCY PHILEMON BEB-A-DON (A RESPONSIBLE CAREER DIPLOMAT
UNVERSED IN DOMESTIC POLITICS AND NOT RPT NOT AMONG
INFLUENTIAL PRESIDENTIAL ADVISORS).

7. STILL ANOTHER EVEN SPICIER RUMOR WOULD HAVE MINISTER OF
TERRITORIAL ADMINISTRATION (I.E. INTERIOR) VICTOR AYISSI
MVODO AS LEADING FIGURE IN PURPORTED UNC FACTION OPPOSING
AHIDJO'S TOTAL CONTROL. HE ALLEGEDLY WISHES TO SEPARATE POLIT-
ICAL LEADERSHIP FROM GOVERNMENTAL AND THUS PUT SOMEONE OTHER
THAN AHIDJO AT UNC HELM. AS POLITICAL SECRETARY ON UNC
NATIONAL POLITICAL BUREAU AND THE KEY VISIBLE FIGURE IN PARTY
AFFAIRS (AFTER AHIDJO), AYISSI MVODO MIGHT BE CONSIDERED
LOGICAL CANDIDATE FOR SUCH ASPIRATIONS. HE IS YOUNG (41)
ABLE TECHNOCRAT, WITH NO OLD-STYLE REGIONAL POLITICAL BASE,
AND COULD BE A MAN OF THE FUTURE IF AND WHEN UNC EVOLVES AS
CAMEROON'S GUIDING POLITICAL INSTITUTION TRANSCENDING
AHIDJO'S PRESENTLY PERSONALIZED TOTAL CONTROL. IT WOULD
APPEAR, HOWEVER, PREMATURE FOR AYISSI MVODO TO MAKE ANY MOVE
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NOW THAT AHIDJO MIGHT CONSIDER HOSTILE, SINCE HE EXISTS AS A
POLITICAL PERSONALITY ONLY AT PRESIDENT'S SUFFERANCE.

8. THERE ARE ALSO THOSE WHO PROFESS TO KNOW THAT AHIDJO IS
IN POOR HEALTH AND HAS HEART SPECIALISTS IN RESIDENCE WITH
HIM AT PALACE AND ACCOMPANYING HIM ON TRAVELS. BUT SUCH
RUMORS ABOUT POOR HEALTH ARE NOT WIDESPREAD. FROM OUR OWN
OBSERVATIONS, AHIDJO LOOKS WELL, SEEMS NO MORE PHLEGMATIC
IN MANNER THAN USUAL, AND INDEED HAS MAINTAINED IN RECENT
MONTHS AT LEAST FULLY NORMAL SCHEDULE OF PARTICIPATION IN
PUBLIC EVENTS.

9. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THERE IS SOME FACTUAL EVIDENCE OF
DISSENT, MOST OF THE RUMORS --ESPECIALLY THOSE OF MORE
SERIOUS CONTENT--REMAIN UNCONFIRMED AND BY THEIR VERY
NATURE ARE ESSENTIALLY UNCONFIRMABLE. MOST, PERHAPS ALL,
ARE NO DOUBT DISTORTED AND EXAGGERATED, IF NOT PURE INVENTION
OR WISHFUL THINKING ON PART OF THEIR DIFFUSERS. BUT THEY

INDICATE, AT A MINIMUM, THE PRESENCE OF THAT KIND OF WISHFUL THINKING, AND AT A MAXIMUM, THE POSSIBILITY OF MORE EVENTFUL PARTY CONGRESS THAN MOST OBSERVERS CONTINUE TO EXPECT. OUR EXPECTATION NEVERTHELESS REMAINS THAT PARTY CONGRESS WILL PROCEED SMOOTHLY UNDER USUAL AHIDJO DOMINATION. CAMEROON IS STILL AHIDJO'S DOMAIN AND LIKELY TO REMAIN SO FOR FORESEEABLE FUTURE SO LONG AS HE RETAINS THE WILL TO CONTINUE TO LEAD. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT SUCH WILL IS SLIPPING, ALTHOUGH HE MIGHT POSSIBLY HAVE DECIDED HE COULD USE A HIGH-LEVEL HELPER OF HIS OWN CHOOSING.

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